

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

FROM: Mark A. McLoughlin
Director of Environmental Services
California High-Speed Rail Authority
770 L Street, Suite 1160
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of a Project Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement for the California High-Speed Rail System, San Francisco to San Jose Project Section, Blended System Project

The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority), as the Lead Agency for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process for a proposed California High-Speed Rail (HSR) system, **is rescinding the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the San Francisco to San Jose Project Section published in December, 2008**, and will jointly prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the San Francisco to San Jose Project Section (Figure 1) of the California HSR System, Blended System Project, in compliance with CEQA and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Authority is now issuing this new NOP to inform stakeholders (members of the public; Tribes; federal, state and local agencies; organizations, and other parties) about the Blended System Project and solicit their input on the scope of the EIR. The preparation of the San Francisco to San Jose Project Section EIR/EIS for the blended system will involve a scoping and public outreach process; development of preliminary engineering designs; and assessment of environmental effects associated with the construction, operation, and maintenance of the HSR system, including track, ancillary facilities, and stations, along the Caltrain corridor from San Francisco to San Jose.

The Authority and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) will hold scoping meetings and outreach activities as part of the CEQA/NEPA process.¹ FRA is the federal lead agency for NEPA and will publish a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register, announcing that FRA is rescinding its 2008 NOI and issuing a new NOI to initiate the federal environmental review process for the San Francisco to San Jose Project Section of the California HSR System, Blended System Project.

Background

In December 2008, the Authority and FRA, respectively, issued an NOP (SCH No. 2008122079) and NOI for preparing an EIR/EIS for the San Francisco to San Jose Project Section of the proposed California HSR System. In 2009, the Authority and FRA completed project scoping and made publicly available alternatives screening documents for the rail corridor that were based on an entirely grade separated four-track system between San Francisco and San Jose in which HSR would share tracks with Caltrain express commuter trains. This proposal generated concerns from communities along the Caltrain rail corridor because of the perceived magnitude of impacts to environmental and community resources. In response to these concerns, the Authority suspended further work on the EIR/EIS in mid-2011 so that it could consider the potential to blend HSR and Caltrain operations within a smaller project footprint (Authority 2011). In November 2011, the Authority proposed blended operations for the San Francisco to San Jose Project Section, which would provide HSR service between the two cities without requiring a four-track system.

In April 2012, the *California High-Speed Rail Program Revised 2012 Business Plan* (Authority 2012) described the proposed blended system as primarily a two-track system that would be

¹ The Authority has prepared this Notice of Preparation voluntarily and is not waiving any rights it may have related to Surface Transportation Board jurisdiction and regulation of this proposed project under the Interstate Commerce Commission Termination Act of 1995, including any preemptive effect that Act may have on CEQA as to this proposed project.

shared by Caltrain and HSR service, and other current passenger and freight rail tenants. The 2012 Business Plan explained that the blended approach would significantly reduce community impacts as compared to the fully grade-separated four track system and be more cost effective, and therefore concluded that as allowed by law, the HSR project to be studied in the San Francisco to San Jose Project Section EIR/EIS would be the Blended System Project. Other actions establishing the framework for blended operations along the Caltrain corridor included adoption of the *Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Resolution No. 4056 Memorandum of Understanding*² (MTC 2012), and passage of Senate Bills 1029³ and 557.⁴

Public Meetings

Written comments on the scope of the San Francisco to San Jose Project Section EIR/EIS should be provided to the Authority by June 10, 2016. Public scoping meetings are scheduled from May 23, 2016 to May 25, 2016. The scoping meetings will be held from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm at the following locations:

- **San Francisco: Monday, May 23**
UCSF Mission Bay
11500 Owens Street
San Francisco, CA 94158
- **San Mateo: Tuesday, May 24**
San Mateo Marriott
1770 S. Amphlett Boulevard
San Mateo, CA 94402
- **Mountain View: Wednesday, May 25**
SFV Lodge
361 Villa Street
Mountain View, CA 94041

Comments

Written comments on the scope of the EIR/EIS should be sent to Mr. Mark McLoughlin, Director of Environmental Services, Attention: San Francisco to San Jose Section EIR/EIS, California High-Speed Rail Authority, 100 Paseo de San Antonio, San Jose, CA 95113, or via email with subject line "San Francisco to San Jose Section EIR/EIS" to: sanfrancisco_sanjose@hsr.ca.gov. Comments may also be provided orally or in writing at the scoping meetings.

For Further Information Contact

Mr. Guy Preston, PE, Regional Delivery Manager, California High Speed Rail Authority, 100 Paseo de San Antonio, San Jose, CA 95113. Telephone: (408) 277-1091, email: sanfrancisco_sanjose@hsr.ca.gov.

Supplementary Information

The Authority was established in 1996 and is authorized and directed by statute to undertake the planning and development of a proposed statewide HSR system that is fully coordinated with

² The Authority and eight other San Francisco Bay Area agencies (Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board, City and County of San Francisco, San Francisco County Transportation Authority, Transbay Joint Powers Authority, San Mateo County Transportation Authority, Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, City of San Jose, and MTC) approved MTC Resolution No. 4056 Memorandum of Understanding in March 2012.

³ Senate Bill 1029, approved July 2012, amended the Budget Act of 2012 to appropriate funds for HSR projects in the San Francisco to San Jose corridor, consistent with the blended system strategy identified in the Authority's 2012 Business Plan, and MTC Resolution No. 4056.

⁴ Senate Bill 557 was passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor in 2013. It provides that any bond funds appropriated pursuant to Senate Bill 1029 shall be used solely to implement a blended system and that any track expansion beyond the blended system approach would require the approval of all nine parties to the MTC Resolution No. 4056.

other public transportation services. In 2005, the Authority and FRA completed the *Final Program Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the proposed California High-Speed Train System* (Authority and FRA 2005) as the first phase of a tiered environmental review process. The Statewide Program EIR/EIS (Authority and FRA 2005) analyzed a No Project/No Action Alternative, a Modal Alternative involving expanding freeways, airports, and conventional rail systems, and a HSR alternative using electric propulsion and steel-wheel-on-steel-rail vehicles capable of operating speeds of 220 mph on fully grade separated rail alignments with state-of-the art safety, signaling, and communication systems. The Authority certified the Statewide Program EIR under CEQA and approved the proposed HSR system, and FRA issued a Record of Decision under NEPA on the Statewide Program EIS.

In approving the Statewide Program EIR/EIS (Authority and FRA 2005), the Authority and FRA selected the HSR Alternative for intercity travel in California between the major metropolitan centers of Sacramento and the San Francisco Bay Area in the north, through the Central Valley, to the cities of Los Angeles and San Diego in the south, selected certain corridors/general alignments and general station locations for further study, committed to mitigation strategies and design practices, and specified further measures to guide the development of the HSR system at the site-specific project level of environmental review to avoid and minimize potential significant environmental impacts. The two agencies did not select corridors or station locations between the Bay Area and the Central Valley in 2005, however, but decided to prepare a second program EIR/EIS focused on this area.

In 2008, the Authority and FRA completed the *Final Bay Area to Central Valley High-Speed Train Program EIR/EIS* (Authority and FRA 2008), that further evaluated alignments and station locations within the broad corridor between and including the Altamont Pass and the Pacheco Pass to connect the Bay Area and Central Valley portions of the HSR system. The Authority and FRA selected the Pacheco Pass–San Francisco and San Jose termini network alternative, with preferred corridor alignments and station location options. The selected alignment uses the Caltrain rail right-of-way between San Francisco and San Jose along the San Francisco Peninsula, and the Pacheco Pass via Henry Miller Road, between San Jose and the Central Valley. Due to litigation, the Authority revised and recirculated its Bay Area to Central Valley Program EIR twice, eventually certifying the Partially Revised Final Program EIR in 2012 and approving the Pacheco Pass network alternative. Figure 2 identifies the statewide high-speed rail system.

The San Francisco to San Jose Project Section EIR/EIS will tier from and build upon the previous work prepared for, and incorporated in the Statewide Program EIR/EIS (Authority and FRA 2005), Bay Area to Central Valley Program EIR/EIS (Authority and FRA 2008), and Partially Revised Program EIR (Authority 2012) in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality regulations, (40 CFR 1508.28) and State CEQA Guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations 15168(b)). The preparation of the San Francisco to San Jose Project Section EIR/EIS will involve the development of preliminary engineering designs and the assessment of potential environmental effects associated with the construction, operation, and maintenance of the HSR system in this project section.

The San Francisco to San Jose Project Section EIR/EIS will describe the Blended System Project in detail (see also below); identify site-specific environmental impacts from construction, operation, and maintenance of the Blended System Project; identify specific mitigation measures to address those impacts; and incorporate appropriate design practices to avoid and minimize potential significant environmental impacts. The site characteristics, size, nature, and timing of the proposed project will be described as a basis for determining whether the impacts are potentially significant and whether impacts can be avoided, minimized, or mitigated. Information and documents regarding this HSR environmental review process will be made available through the Authority's Internet site: <http://www.hsr.ca.gov>.

In addition to the CEQA and NEPA process, the Authority is required by law to publish a Business Plan, updated every two years, that includes a description of service type, chronology of statewide construction, estimate of capital costs per section, operating and maintenance costs,

environmental review schedule, and discussion of public and private funding availability. The 2016 Business Plan, released in February 2016 and adopted on April 28, 2016, describes phased implementation of the statewide HSR system. The 2016 Business Plan prioritizes construction between San Jose and the Central Valley, but also emphasizes the importance of extending HSR service from San Francisco to San Jose as soon as possible.

Alternatives

The San Francisco to San Jose Project Section EIR/EIS will consider a No Action or No Project Alternative and one or more HSR Alternatives for the Blended System Project. The San Francisco to San Jose Project Section of the HSR system would connect to the San Jose to Merced Section at Diridon Station, which would extend HSR service from the San Francisco Bay Area to the Central Valley and Southern California.

No Project Alternative: The No Project Alternative (No Action or No Build) represents conditions in the San Francisco to San Jose corridor as they exist in 2016 and as they would exist in future years based on projected growth, programmed and funded improvements to the intercity transportation system and other reasonably foreseeable projects through the implementation of Phase 1 operations in 2029, and a future year of operation in 2040, taking into account the following sources of information: the State Transportation Improvement Program, regional transportation plans for all modes of travel, airport plans, intercity passenger rail plans, and city and county plans.

HSR Blended System Alternative(s): The Blended System Project follows the Caltrain right-of-way from San Francisco to San Jose. It would utilize existing and in-progress infrastructure developed by Caltrain for its electrification project, but require additional construction above and beyond electrification. The Blended System Project is anticipated to include the following, subject to continued planning and engineering following the scoping/outreach process:

New and/or Upgraded Infrastructure

- Track improvements to support higher speeds, including upgrades of tracks, trackbeds, ties, interlockings, and curve straightening
- At least one set of passing tracks, with potential alternative locations for additional passing tracks
- One terminal storage maintenance facility, with potential alternative locations
- Improvements to existing bridges necessary to accommodate mixed traffic
- Potential grade separations necessary to support blended operations
- Installation of four-quadrant gates at remaining grade crossings

Proposed Operations

- High-speed rail vehicles operating with Caltrain on predominantly the same tracks between San Francisco and San Jose
- Speeds of up to 110 miles per hour
- Operations plan that would allow for up to 4 high-speed trains per hour/per direction in the peak period

Upgrades to Existing Stations

- Raised and straightened platforms, platform screens (or other safety features) and passenger facilities at 4th & King, Millbrae and Diridon stations.

Transbay Transit Center (TTC) and Downtown Extension (DTX) projects

- The Authority proposes its Blended System Project will reach the TTC in San Francisco via the planned DTX 1.3-mile extension of passenger rail track from the current terminus at the Caltrain 4th and King Station. The Transbay Joint Powers Authority is handling both projects, which have been subject of separate environmental review. The TTC is currently under construction. The DTX is not yet under construction. Both projects will be addressed in the San Francisco to San Jose Project Section EIR/EIS.

The selected station location in the city of San Francisco is the Transbay Transit Center, but the Authority anticipates that the 4th and King Station would operate as an interim station until completion of the Transbay Transit Center, which is being constructed and funded by the Transbay Joint Powers Authority. Other HSR stations would be located in the city of Millbrae at the existing Millbrae BART/Caltrain Station and in the city of San Jose at the existing Diridon Station. These locations were selected by the Authority and FRA through the Bay Area to Central Valley Program EIR/EIS (Authority and FRA 2008) considering the project purpose and need and the program objectives.

Project Location

The project location is shown on Figure 1. The project location relative to the HSR system as a whole is shown in Figure 2.

Probable Effects

The EIR/EIS process will evaluate and document the effects of the proposed project on the physical, human, and natural environment. The San Francisco to San Jose Project Section EIR/EIS will evaluate the potential social, environmental and economic impacts of the construction and operation of the proposed blended system shared by Caltrain and HSR service, and other current passenger and freight rail tenants along the Caltrain corridor between San Francisco and San Jose. Impact areas to be addressed include transportation, including impacts on existing passenger and freight rail tenants; safety and security; land use and zoning; land acquisition, displacements, and relocations; cumulative and secondary impacts; cultural resource impacts, including impacts on historical and archaeological resources and parklands/recreation areas; neighborhood compatibility and environmental justice; geology and paleontology impacts; natural resources impacts, including air quality, wetlands, water resources, noise and vibration, wildlife and ecosystems, including endangered species; energy and hazardous materials. Measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate adverse impacts will be identified and evaluated.

The San Francisco to San Jose Project Section EIR/EIS will be prepared in accordance with FRA's *Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts* (64 Fed. Reg. 28545 [May 26, 1999]) and the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations implementing NEPA at 40 CFR parts 1500-1508. The San Francisco to San Jose Project Section EIR/EIS also will address, as necessary, other applicable statutes, regulations, and executive orders, including (but not limited to) the Clean Water Act, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, the Endangered Species Act, and Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice.

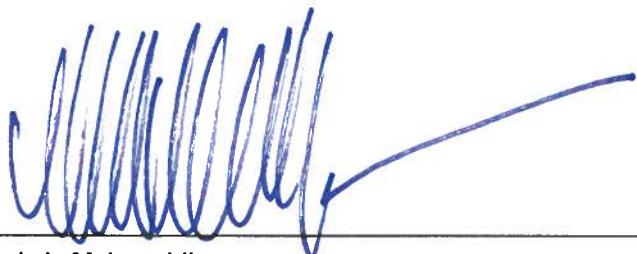
Scoping and Comments

Public scoping meetings are an important component of the scoping process for the San Francisco to San Jose Project Section EIR/EIS. The Authority encourages broad participation in the EIR process during scoping and review of the resulting environmental documents. Comments and suggestions are invited from all interested agencies, Native American tribes, and the public at-large so that the full range of issues related to the proposed action and all reasonable alternatives are addressed and significant issues are identified. In particular, the Authority is interested in determining whether there are areas of environmental concern where there might be a potential for significant impacts at the project level. Public agencies with jurisdiction are requested to advise the Authority of the applicable permit and environmental review requirements

of each agency and the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to the agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Public agencies are requested to advise the Authority if they anticipate taking a major action in connection with the proposed project and if they wish to cooperate in the preparation of the project-level San Francisco to San Jose Project Section EIR/EIS. The scoping meetings described in this NOP will also be advertised locally and included in additional public notification.

Public agencies are requested to send their responses to this NOP to the Authority within 30 days after receipt of this notice and no later than June 10, 2016. Send responses, comments, or questions regarding this Project to Mark A. McLoughlin, Director of Environmental Services for the California High Speed Rail Authority at the address shown above.

Date: May 9, 2016

Signature: 

Mark A. McLoughlin
Director of Environmental Services
California High-Speed Rail Authority



LEGEND

- Proposed San Francisco to San Jose Section Alignment
- Proposed HSR Stations
- County Limits

0 5 10 Miles

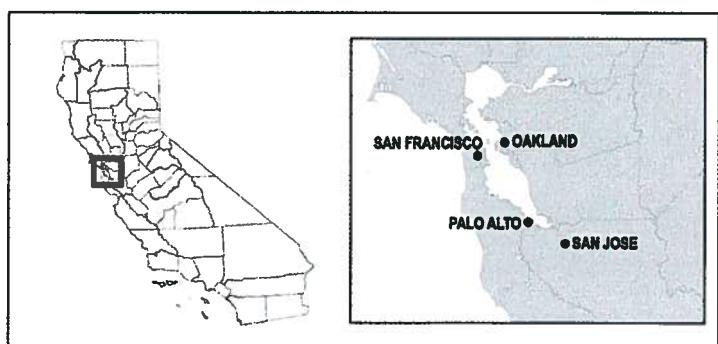


Figure 1. San Francisco to San Jose Project Section

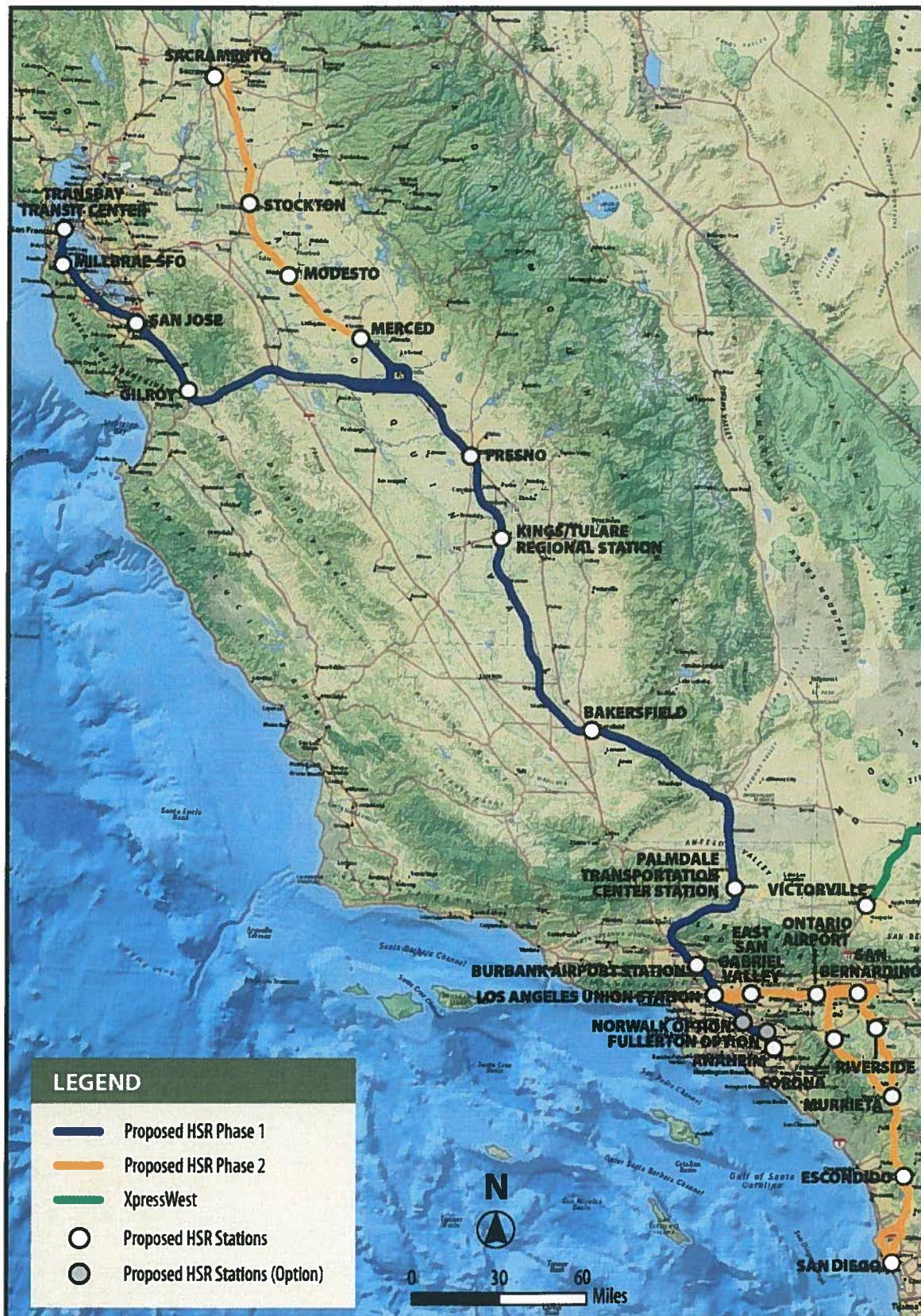


Figure 2. Statewide HSR System